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ABSTRACT

In the past, the skill of the counselor has touched the lives of only a few children. Recently, the emerging role of the counselor as a specialist, consultant, group learer, and supervisor of paraprofessionals has broadened his contact with the student body as a whole. But these are only stopgap measures until a more highly integrated approach to counseling can be incorporated into the curriculum. The entire student body would benefit from a highly unified program centered around counseling. The model presented emphasizes the integration of the principles of human and career development psychology with the everyday school-related experiences of the child. Because of the nature of the materials which would be employed, the learning experience would be largely activity-centered and would demand the participation of the pupil as an active rather than as a passive learner. (Author/PC)

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Toward an Integrated Elementary School Curriculum Through Career Awareness Activities

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Historically, the responsibility for career development has been delegated to the senior high school counselor. From our knowledge about the psychology of career development and its relationship to self-concept, it is clear that it is at the elementary school level where children begin to develop their attitudes and values upon which future decisions are ultimately based. According to Super (Osipow, 1968), occupational choice is a life-long process which is comprised of a synthesis between one's self-concept and capabilities with the realities of the external world of work. Students at the elementary school level must explore their values and develop their interests and skills. They must also learn how to make decisions based upon experience and judgment. Clearly, one's performance at the elementary school level influences the likelihood of similar academic and social performance in the secondary school. This being the case, it seems essential that children be provided with exploration-type activities which will broaden their repertoire of experiences and extend their outlook and reach.

The Curriculum - A Vehicle for Change

To remedy the problems that confront many of the currently popular curricula, the entire elementary school organization should be centered around a counseling-oriented career-awareness and self-concept theme, thereby equipping youngsters with the skills required to function in our vastly changing society (Whitefield, 1968; Thompson, 1969). This proposed design would accommodate virtually all "subject matter" or

"content areas" which are usually taught. This thematic approach, if successfully employed, would not limit or constrain the possibilities of items to be included but would rather organize them into a logical, systematic and cohesive construct.

The use of career models would provide the student throughout his school experience with the opportunity to practice, imitate and identify with those things people do in these various models. As the student progresses, he would change his mind many times about "what I want to be when I grow up." The important fact is that he would learn how decisions are made at a time while he is growing up and developing in many areas and is free to explore without the threat of failure. The intent of such a focus is not to prematurely guide students into making irrevocable decisions. To the contrary, this proposed model suggests the need to equip each student with the skills for logical decision-making and an opportunity for exploratory and participatory experiences throughout his school years. In short, the child would develop his self-concept in relation to many occupational models in terms of his own unique interests and capabilities. Of equal importance, the student would be developing a personal hierarchy of values and feelings of self-worth (Maslow, 1962).

The student may no longer complain about a fragmented program. Each subject will be taught around a unified theme. Furthermore, this design does not lock the teacher into a highly prescriptive format in terms of actual content but

rather provides a structure into which any content can comfortably fit. Effective education should equip each student with those skills necessary to function effectively both in and out of school, and open the horizons of each student's mind in the process of developing a positive self-concept.

Developing Career Awareness, Realistic Self-Concepts and Values through Instructional Media

Virtually any subject matter usually taught in the elementary school could be taught within the confines of this thematic curriculum (Haettenschwiller, 1969). For example, let us cite two entry level positions, (a) a cook's helper and (b) a truck driver. For both positions, and most above unskilled laborer, a knowledge of reading is essential. The material presented to the students, within the confines of their regularly scheduled reading program, could easily be geared around the particular occupational model under study. Certainly job applications and directions require reading and writing. Road maps and recipes are read. Rather than using basal readers, government- and industry-produced materials about these various jobs would serve as the texts. The program could be easily individualized to meet the specific needs and interests of the children by providing them with the opportunity for self-selection. Newspapers, month-old magazines and reprints from literary reviews could supplement the program. These materials are easily obtained and often either free or of minimum expense. The Sears Catalog or the Yellow Pages could provide vast sources of information and

spur the imagination of the child into exploring almost any item considered to be of value to either the child or the teacher.

The arithmetic program could be taught, for example, in terms of measurement of liquids, distances and money. The cook's helper and truck driver both need to know about various methods of measurement. The academically prone student, especially in the elementary school, has many of the same basic needs as his classmate who may eventually become a factory worker. It is later in a child's academic experiences that the delineation between the "academic" and "vocational" student is made and then it is often inaccurate.

Map reading is a natural to social studies. Correct hygienic practices as they relate to food handling are appropriate to the teaching of health education. Simple science experiments in physics are as appropriate to the student who ultimately becomes a carpenter or housewife as to one who becomes an architect or designer of window displays. The progressions from entry-level positions as the topic of discussion, i.e., the unifying theme, to those requiring greater skills and knowledge provide the classroom teacher with a logical means of sequencing and intensifying the content.

The application of this thematic curriculum design is by no means limited to the use of untraditional reading materials. The screening of existing materials can be the first step to the implementation of this program. The need

for individualized reading instruction and the use of literature as a vehicle for assisting a child to grow intellectually and emotionally is stressed by Smith, Goodman and Meredith (1970). Careful selection of such materials can provide the learner with an opporutnity to explore certain developmental and emotional problems which he is experiencing. In such a case, the teacher or counselor would help a child select a book about getting along, loneliness, moving into a new neighborhood or growing up.

Berretta (1970) suggests that the teacher use the individual interview as a means of reading instruction. Here the child interacts and discusses his reactions to the book he just completed with his teacher. This provides the teacher with an opportunity to follow closely the cognitive and emotional growth of each student. Within the classroom setting, it is questionable where "counseling" stops and the development of a positive self-concept and values through the reading of literature begins. Rosenblatt (1968) discusses the effects of literature upon the reader as follows:

> "Literary experiences may help to fasten his emotions upon new and happier types of relationships or upon images of new and more socially valuable satisfactions to be derived from life. Thus he may acquire the sympathy and insight, the critical attitudes, and the sense of human values needed for his creation of new ideals and new personal goals."

Participants in the Change Process

Who is responsible for developing and implementing this proposed curricular change? It seems highly unlikely that even the most energetic and cooperative principal would find it possible to implement without the approval and support of his superientendent of schools. It would take several months to collect and assemble the reading materials. It would require the combined skills of curriculum experts, classroom teachers, psychologists, guidance counselors, representatives for the U.S. government Employment Service and lay industrial leaders. The task is by no means an easy one. The elementary school guidance worker is an integral part of this program as the primary resource person. It is the counselor who has been educated in the theory and application of vocational development and occupational information. It is the counselor who is trained to work with students who have poor self-concepts and display self-defeating behavior.

The time is long past due when curriculum experts and counselors work together. In the past, the counselor has closed his door behind him and had a conference with an individual student without adequate concern for the overall organization of the child's learning experiences. The curriculum expert has been secluded on the university campus. The classroom teacher has been left to fend for herself. Possibly, if a highly integrated and unified curriculum design centered around both the immediate and long-range needs of the pupil was implemented, the best interests of

both the students and the professionals would be met. The use of a thematic design as described previously may be the unifying force which will bring all interested parties together and working towards the same goal--better education for tomorrow's adults.

Implications for Counseling

This proposed change in the curriculum is an attempt at placing the counselor in a more central position in the organization of the elementary school. However, the counselor would primarily continue to devote the majority of his time to those social, emotional and educational problems which confront individual or small groups of pupils. The counselor would continue to work closely with teachers in regard to the kinds of student-centered issues mentioned above. As an advisor or consultant to curriculum planners, he would be responsible for technical input about occupational information and the psychology of human and career development. Since these are often highly theoretical issues which need to be interpreted, adapted and applied to the individual school setting, the counselor will assume this function.

One must seriously consider the impact of such a change on the counseling program *per se*. The major emphasis of this curriculum model is the development of the student's self-concept and value hierarchy. A child with a positive self-concept will make choices which are consistent with his intact value system. The implementation of the suggested

thematic curriculum design will foster insight and awareness to both one's self and the world. The use of such a model should reduce the amount of crisis counseling by placing a greater emphasis on prevention through a systematic approach to the development of self-concept and values.

Conclusions

In the past the skill of the counselor has touched the lives of only a few children. Recently the emerging role of the counselor as a specialist, consultant, group leader and supervisor of paraprofessionals has broadened his contact with the student body as a whole. But these are only stopgap measures until a more highly integrated approach to counseling can be incorporated into the curriculum. The entire student body would benefit from a highly unified program centered around counseling. This model emphasizes the integration of the principles of human and career development psychology with the everyday school-related experiences of the child. Because of the nature of the materials which would be employed, the learning experiences would be largely activity-centered and would demand the participation of the pupil as an active rather than as a passive learner.

If elementary school counseling is to make its mark on education in the 70's, it must take a position of leadership. If our elementary schools are to serve the best interests of our young, we will have to adapt our methods and motives to meet their immediate and long-range needs however

difficult these are to assess. In the final analysis we must assist each child to establish his identity and formulate his value hierarchy. It is about time that school was all about growing up, making wise decisions and getting along. The formal amassing of information per se must take a secondary role to human development, especially at the lower level. Without healthy and secure children the future of our society is questionable.

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